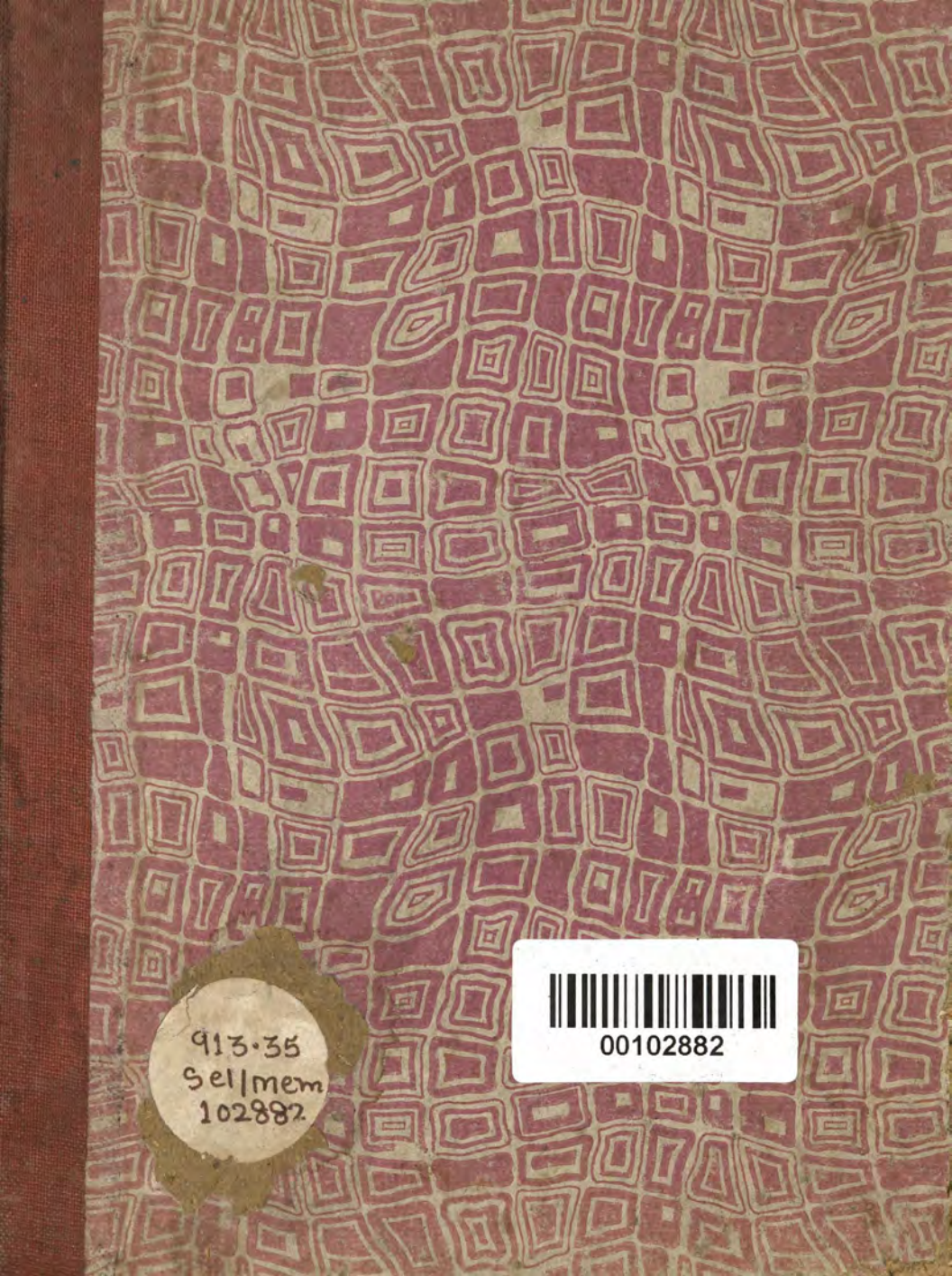
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No. LI.—New Series.

MEMOIR

ON

THE RUINS OF BABYLON.

102882

BY

WILLIAM BEAUMONT SELBY,

COMMANDER INDIAN NAVY, AND SURVEYOR IN MESOPOTAMIA.

WITH PLANS

(TWO SHEETS).

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MEMOIR ON THE RUINS OF BABYLON.

In constructing the accompanying Plan of the supposed Ruins of Babylon, I have confined myself strictly to a delineation of the face of the country as it now presents itself, having in no place supplied any hiatus which seemed wanting to complete a ruin, or establish a theory in accordance with any pre-conceived opinion.

I have ventured to use the expression "supposed ruins." A very great authority on questions of antiquity has also, I believe, had doubts as to this being the veritable site of the Babylon of Scripture; but, independent of this, there are two points which must strike every observer.

If these are indeed the remains of Great Babylon, some traces, I should imagine, would yet remain of the immense walls, 300 feet high and 60 thick, which, according to Herodotus, encircled the city for an extent of about 25 miles square, and yet no vestige of them has been discovered.

The banks of canals, of an antiquity that we can form no idea of [save that in the year B. C. 2217 they are first mentioned (Genesis x. 25)], exist in every direction, and show, as some of them do near Al-Heimar, in their disjointed state, how very many cycles must have passed ere constructions like these, broad at the base and narrow at the top, could have assumed the form—a ridge of conical hills—they now present.

And these perhaps were never of a much greater size than they now are, for we find the more modern ones never exceeding 35 feet in height; while those that appeared the most ancient of all,—that stood like sand-hills in the solitary waste, but little affected by the dry climate of the country in which they are,—were but a few feet less in height, and seemed as though they would yet stand as many centuries as they already have,—imperishable monuments of human industry.

It is easy to distinguish between the more modern and the very ancient canals: besides, the former being continuous, they are clothed with a certain quantity of verdure, while the latter have not at any time the least particle of vegetation on them; and in some the continuous line of bank has been lost, and they appear as hillocks.

In all the very ancient ones also the bottom of the canal is on a level with the surface of the earth; in the modern, the depression of the bed is greater or less according to its age.

That so many are found side by side with each other at not many yards' distance, is accounted for by the manner in which canals are begun and deepened here, as the necessity arises from time to time.

A canal is cut from the river, leading either to pasturage grounds or cultivation. In the course of years, what from the deposit brought down by the river, and the drift sand, the necessity arises for clearing it out. This is done, and the soil is thrown up along the side. After the lapse of very many years it attains a height of about 40 feet, when the labour of carrying the soil up, in a country devoid of all mechanical appliances, is greater than that of cutting a new one, which last is accordingly done; and thus we see side by side, and running frequently in the same direction, immense ancient banks of canals, which, but for this explanation, it would be impossible to account for. As the banks of canals then still exist and in fair preservation, and as in the case of those near "Al-Heimar," evidently of vast antiquity—originally composed only of loose earth of a height of 40 feet, and 15 broad at the top—it is surely a fair inference to draw, that of such walls as described by Herodotus some vestige should yet be found.

But none is: and a mass of shapeless detached ruin, in all 6,000 yards long by 3,100 broad, is all that remains of a city occupying an area of 25 miles square.

Again, we do not find in the face of the country, as it is presented among these ruins, any similarity to the doom foretold of Babylon, in Isaiah xiii., 20th to 22nd verses:—"It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation; neither shall the Arabian pitch his tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there. But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there,

and satyrs shall dance there. And the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant palaces."

On the contrary, gardens and cultivation extend in places to the very edge and among the ruins, and in the spring the country is covered with flocks of cattle grazing in every direction; nor do we find here more wild animals than in any other part of the country. I was there at one time in April, and, save in some places where the soil is nitrous, the country was covered with vegetation, fruits and flowers abutting close on the "Amran" mounds, and corn-fields within 100 yards of the "Mujelibé" itself. The modern village of "Jumjumma" also is but a few yards from the ruined "Kasr."

But I venture on no speculation regarding the structure of any one of the vast ruins which yet remain, much reduced from their original size by the bricks which for ages have been taken away to build other cities and towns; nor on the position which the body of the city probably possessed. Eminent and learned historians, ancient and modern, have drawn deductions from what they have witnessed and from the recorded facts that history has handed down; and the erudite knowledge and literary acumen of one of the most distinguished of the latter, have at last elicited from the stones of the ruins themselves as much knowledge regarding them as perhaps we may ever attain to.

Thus, disclaiming any attempt to elaborate what has already been done, I would yet draw attention to a few points which merit notice in explanation of the Map I have completed, the more so that, as regards some of them, I believe they have not been marked in the plans which have been previously made.

And first, I would observe, that it does not appear that the river has much altered its course since it originally ran through the city, the ruins of which are the subject of the present memoir. A careful inspection of the plan will show the ancient course of the river S.S.W., 1,500 yards from the Mujelibé. Upon the very edge of the ancient west bank of the river are mounds of the same construction as those in the same line on the east. In the lapse of ages the river, having a natural tendency to the S.E., has gradually encroached on that side, but, meeting greater solidity in the mounds of ruins than in the alluvial soil, has again been diverted to the westward. Passing on to the southward of the ruins it again encroaches to the eastward, and

the well-defined line of the ancient western bank of the river shows certainly, where the river anciently ran.

Again, the two sides of the large oblong ruin called "Annana," extending 1750 yards in a N.N.W. and S.S.E. direction, are also on *the very edge* of the old bank; and a careful inspection of the plan would enable us, with very few additions, to complete a rampart of this breadth and 2,900 yards long, which would include all but the Kasr and Mujelibé. I do not take upon myself to say that this oblong ruin is of the same date as the other ruins; be it of what era it may, the river could never have been 250 yards from the course it now holds since this now ruined enclosure was made.

I was informed, indeed tradition has handed down, that anciently the river, then called Nil, ran through the country a little east of the main ruins. I found indeed a vestige of what might be supposed to have been the course of a stream, 140 yards wide and 700 yards long, but a careful examination of the face of the country did not enable me to trace it any further. The part I have noticed lies N.E. from the Mujelibé, distant 900 yards. The supposed course, extending from the present Euphrates to beyond "Al-Heimar," has, I believe, been included in a plan, the materials for which were, about three years ago, collected by my predecessor here.

N.N.W., 1,100 yards from the Mujelibé, and running in the direction which is assigned to the supposed course of ancient Nil, is a ridge of small pebbles from 8 to 15 yards wide, and elevated about 8 feet above the surface. Over the whole extent of country about the ruins I found no other soil of this description, nor any nearer than close to the vicinity of Iskanderia Khan, a distance of about 25 miles north. I can in no way account for its presence there, entirely isolated as it is, and record the fact as I found it.

There are also two other very ancient ruins, whose use or structure I am quite unable to decide upon, and seek therefore only to describe them exactly as they are.

East, from north end of Mujelibé and distant 650 yards, is a broad way of nearly uniform breadth of about 100 yards, and elevated about 18 inches to 2 feet through its entire length, extending a distance of 3,700 yards, where it abruptly terminates in a marsh. It is quite barren, and bears the appearance of having

been a broad roadway. At the western end it is slightly depressed in the centre.

Just to south of outer rampart, and extending 7,500 yards in its entire length, and running in a curved line to E. 20″ N., is another exactly similar, save that nearly along its whole course it is of that nitrous soil which marks where ruins are, and so soft that one sinks to the ankles in walking over it.

In one part of it (as marked in the plan) it widens out into a circle with four similar ways diverging from it, one of which I traced to a very ancient branch of Nil Canal, where it assumed the appearance of a canal. I could find no traces of it further than I have marked it. Another, less in length, of a more firm soil, and running in a different direction, will be seen in the second sheet of the plan.

I have thus endeavoured to give an accurate and faithful delineation of the face of the country as it is at present presented, and, avoiding all speculation, submit it for the opinion of those whose knowledge, matured by long study of ancient history, will enable them perhaps (from my labours) to elicit new facts in support of old theories, which I would only hope have not been in vain.

As my object was to complete a plan of the supposed ruins of Babylon, and not a map of the country, it seemed unnecessary to include so large a space as would have been requisite had the whole country lying between Hillah and the Birs Nimrud been mapped out; as, with the exception of a few insignificant mounds and banks of some old canals, it is a flat plain. I only constructed a plan on the same scale as the Map of Babylon itself, and give its bearing and distance from the Mujelibé and Hillah minaret.

At some future time also, it will perhaps be deemed well to survey the whole of the adjacent country with as great closeness of detail as I have devoted to the present work; then only can an idea be formed of the vast extent of ruins which cover the whole expanse of country between Baghdad and Hillah.

W. B. SELBY,
Surveyor in Mesopotamia.

River Tigris, 5th March 1859.

BOMBAY:
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BABY
EL HEIMER
WILLIA
Commander Indian
Marsh
from the
Headwaters
Place where covered with a watery plant called Sharon
Marshes
Meadows
Woods
Banks
Flats

LON. Sheet II.

AND BIRS NIMRUD

by

M. BEAUMONT SELBY

Navy & Surveyor in Mesopotamia

Capt.n W.m Collingwood R.N

Scale of Yards

(Signed) W.m B. Selby,
Commander Indian Navy
and Surveyor in Mesopotamia.
Baghdad, February 4th 1852.

The Ruins from the East mounds to N.E. distant about 300 Yards

The Mujelibè from the same mound

BABYLON.

SHEET I.

bearing N° 1 mile.

Marsh ground
Marsh
Abdc
Tel Suffre
Wells of Good Soft Water
Tel Suffic
Tel Kurnub
Tel Sighil
Rayan Fort
Canal
Embankment
Dallawa Walled
Riffendi Village
Mud Cen
Nil
El Kab
Ancient
Well

To

HIS HIGHNESS OMAR PASHA. G.C.B.R.&.&.

Generalissimo of the Ottoman Armies & Governor General of Turkish Arabia.

This Plan of the supposed Ruins of Babylon

is with his Highness's permission and as a small tribute to his Highness's interest liberality and zeal in the cause of Antiquarian Research

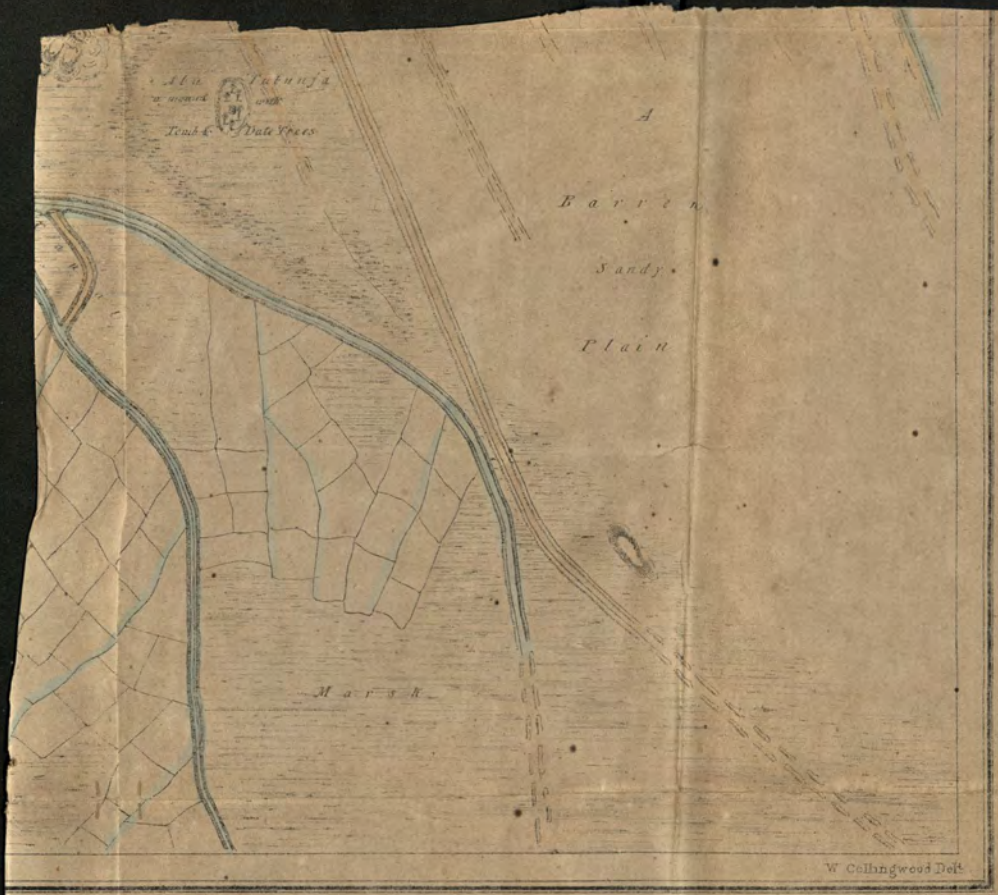
Respectfully Dedicated

by

WILLIAM BEAUMONT SELBY. and

Commander Indian Navy & Surveyor in Mesopotamia.

Assisted by Lieut. W. Collingwood R. N.



Scale of Yards.

(Sgd) W. B. Selby,

Commander Indian Navy,

& Surveyor in Mesopotamia.

Baghdad Feby 14th 1859.

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